

# Fear, Hope, and Doing Good: Wives as a Paradigm of Mission in 1 Peter<sup>\*</sup>

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## Summary:

Like 1 Corinthians 7,12-16, 1 Peter 3,1-6 indicates that mixed marriages may be opportunities for missionary witness. But the text in 1 Peter gives much more indication than does Paul about both the means by which this witness should be offered and the potential risks to wives in doing so. This article explores the stance recommended in 1 Peter for these wives, and shows how this forms a paradigm of the missionary stance expected of the community as a whole. The author of 1 Peter promotes a mode of missionary engagement that is essentially the quiet and gentle living of a good way of life. Verbal witness is to be given when requested or required, which may be in situations of legal trial. This missionary stance was both influential and important to the development of Christianity in the early centuries of its existence.

## Keywords:

mission; wives; mixed marriage; witness; missionary strategy; 1 Peter.

## Introduction: Paul and 1 Peter on Mixed Marriage and Mission

One of the reasons for the debate about mission in the early Pauline communities is the absence of any direct exhortations to members of these communities to engage in evangelism.<sup>1</sup> Even if a few texts might hint at evangelistic activity on the part of some of the Pauline congregations (e.g., Phil 1,14; 1 Thess 1,8), the lack of direct instruction to do so is something of a puzzle. Certainly it raises questions for

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<sup>\*</sup> An invited main paper presented to the Congress of Iberian Biblical Associations, Tarragona, 1-3 Sept 2015. I would like to thank the participants in the conference for their generous welcome and friendly discussion, and especially Santiago Guijarro Oporto, David Álvarez Cineira, and the organizing committee for the kind invitation. I would also like to thank Bradley Arnold for assistance with some of the research for this paper.

<sup>1</sup> See e.g., J. P. DICKSON, *Mission-Commitment in Ancient Judaism and in the Pauline Communities: The Shape, Extent and Background of Early Christian Mission* (WUNT 2.159; Tübingen, 2003); R. L. PLUMMER, *Paul's Understanding of the Church's Mission: Did the Apostle Paul Expect the Early Christian Communities to Evangelize?* (Carlisle, 2006); J. P. WARE, *Paul and the Mission of the Church: Philipians in Ancient Jewish Context* (Grand Rapids, MI, 2011 [2005]).

contemporary evangelical Christians, who place great weight upon following biblical teaching and are often urged, individually and collectively, to engage in witness and mission.

Interestingly, one of the few places where Paul does talk about a missionary achievement on the part of ‘ordinary’ members of the churches is in 1 Corinthians 7,12-16, where ‘mixed marriages’ are described as a context in which one partner may ‘save’ the other: τί γὰρ οἶδας, γύναι, εἰ τὸν ἄνδρα σώσεις; ἢ τί οἶδας, ἄνερ, εἰ τὴν γυναῖκα σώσεις; (1 Cor 7,16). Commentators have long discussed whether these questions imply a positive or negative answer, but it seems best, with J. B. Lightfoot, to conclude that they are at least optimistic in outlook, expressing hope rather than doubt, ‘implying that there is a reasonable chance’ of the unbeliever’s salvation.<sup>2</sup> Paul’s main concern in this passage, however, is not with mission or evangelism but with marriage and divorce. Just as the Lord’s teaching indicates that married believers should not divorce (1 Cor 7,10-11) so Paul extends this to so-called mixed marriages (7,12-16), urging that in these cases too the believer should maintain the marriage (vv. 12-13), so far as this lies within their power (v. 15). Paul gives various reasons why they should do this: he insists that the unbelieving partner is sanctified (ἡγιάσται) by the believing spouse (v. 14) and that the children of even a mixed marriage are holy (ἅγια); and he holds out the possible salvation of the unbelieving spouse as another good reason to stay together. However, Paul gives no specific indications as to how the Christian partner may help to achieve this salvation of the unbelieving spouse: Is it through their verbal testimony, the character and quality of their way of life, or simply through the attraction or witness of the wider Christian community? Moreover, he shows no awareness of the conflicts and risks that such situations may entail, particularly for wives.

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<sup>2</sup> J. B. LIGHTFOOT, *Notes on Epistles of St Paul from Unpublished Commentaries* (London & New York, 1904) 227. Cf. also G. D. FEE, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians. Revised Edition* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI, 2014) 337-38; W. SCHRAGE, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther (1 Kor 6,12-11,16)* (EKKNT 7.2; Zürich and Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1995) 112.

This brief summary of Paul's perspective in 1 Cor 7,12-16 invites comparison with the other New Testament passage that deals with mixed marriage, 1 Pet 3,1-6. Here too mixed marriages are seen as a particular opportunity for some kind of mission, specifically on the part of wives.<sup>3</sup> In 1 Peter, however, there is much more concrete and specific instruction concerning the means by which such missionary witness should be conducted, and indications concerning the potential risks to a wife in such a situation. Paul's main concern when discussing mixed marriage is divorce; hence he gives us very little indication as to the missionary dynamics that might operate in this small-scale, intimate setting. In 1 Peter, by contrast, there is no indication of any concern about questions of separation and divorce; but there is much more material relevant to a consideration of the ways in which the author sees the conduct of Christian wives' as some kind of missionary witness. In this paper, I want to examine 1 Pet 3,1-6 as a particular case-study of how the author of 1 Peter envisages the life and mission of the church in the world, and what this tells us about the methods and aims of such a mission.

### **Instruction to Wives: 1 Peter 3,1-6**

The instruction to wives forms part of 1 Peter's household code, which runs from 2,18-3,7, though this in turn is set within the wider context of 2,11-4,11.<sup>4</sup> In Col 3,18-4,1 and Eph 5,22-6,9, the most complete and formally structured New Testament household codes, wives and husbands, children and fathers, slaves and masters are all addressed, in that order. Here only three groups are directly addressed: domestic slaves (*οἰκέται*, 2,18-25), wives (3,1-6), and (more briefly) husbands (3,7). The majority of the instruction is thus directed towards slaves and

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<sup>3</sup> On both these texts as indications of the potential missionary influence of wives, see M. Y. MACDONALD, *Early Christian Women and Pagan Opinion: The Power of the Hysterical Woman* (Cambridge, 1996) 189-204.

<sup>4</sup> The most important study of 1 Peter's household code remains that of D. L. BALCH, *Let Wives Be Submissive: The Domestic Code in 1 Peter* (SBLMS 26; Atlanta, GA, 1981).

wives, that is, to the ‘weaker’ social groups within the household structure, specifically those most likely to endure abuse and suffering.

The headline instruction, picking up the general imperative of 2,13 (ὑποτάγητε) is to be submissive – slaves to their masters (Οἱ οἰκέται ὑποτασσόμενοι... τοῖς δεσπόταις [2,18]), and wives to their husbands (Ὁμοίως γυναῖκες ὑποτασσόμεναι τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν [3,1]). This instruction applies to all wives, whether their husbands are Christians or not; καὶ εἴ τινες indicates that some of them may have unbelieving husbands, but this is not the author’s sole or exclusive focus. Nonetheless, of all the instructions to be submissive in the letter (see also 5,5), only the instruction to wives follows the injunction with an immediate explanation of its purpose (ἵνα...). And, significantly for our theme, this purpose is essentially one that relates to mission: that their husbands κερδηθήσονται. This verb conveys the sense of ‘gaining’ someone or something (as, e.g., in Mt 16,26; Phil 3,8), sometimes used with regard to the specific idea of winning someone over or restoring them to right relationship (Mt 18,15). Hence it may be used with the missionary sense of winning someone over to the Christian faith, that is, securing their conversion (1 Cor 9,19-23).<sup>5</sup>

The essential features of the missionary strategy the author recommends for these wives are already encapsulated concisely in v. 1b: διὰ τῆς τῶν γυναικῶν ἀναστροφῆς ἄνευ λόγου. The phrase ἄνευ λόγου makes explicit that verbal testimony or reasoned argument is not the mode of engagement the author promotes here. Rather it is a question of behaviour, conduct, or way of life (ἀναστροφή) – something that can be seen (ἐποπτεύσαντες... v. 2). This is emphatically and repeatedly the key focus for the author here;<sup>6</sup> indeed, the word ἀναστροφή is a favourite word for the author of

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<sup>5</sup> Jacques Schlosser describes it as ‘un terme technique du langage missionnaire’ (J. SCHLOSSER, *La première épître de Pierre* [CBNT 21; Paris, 2011], 182).

<sup>6</sup> The phrase διὰ τῆς τῶν γυναικῶν ἀναστροφῆς is fronted for emphasis (so M. Dubis, *1 Peter: A Handbook on the Greek Text* [BHGNT; Waco, TX, 2010], 85) and the word ἀναστροφή is repeated again in v. 2.

1 Peter, a point to which we shall return. Verse 2 indicates briefly two key features of this ἀναστροφή: that it is undertaken ἐν φόβῳ and that it is ἀγνή, pure.

As in 2,18 with regard to the domestic slaves, here too the referent of ‘fear’ is uncertain: Is it directed towards husbands or towards God? Several considerations favour the view that the proper object of ‘fear’, according to the author of 1 Peter, is God alone.<sup>7</sup> Firstly, in the cases where it is unambiguous, 1 Peter depicts φόβος as something appropriately shown towards God; indeed, 2,17 draws this distinction carefully (cf. 1,17).<sup>8</sup> Secondly, in the context of 2,18, the immediately following verse (2,19) explicitly mentions ‘awareness of God’ (συνείδησις θεοῦ) as a motivation for right conduct. Here, the phrase in 3,4 (ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ) suggests a similar orientation regarding the crucial arbiter of a wife’s way of life. Finally, the injunction not to be afraid (μὴ φοβούμεναι μηδεμίαν πτόησιν, 3,6; cf. also 3,14) also suggests that proper fear is to be shown to God, and not to humans, whatever their threats.<sup>9</sup>

The adjective ἀγνός indicates that the wives’ way of life must be pure and holy. The term can be used of women in particular to indicate the virtue of being ‘chaste’,<sup>10</sup> but there is no reason here to restrict its meaning in this way. In 1 Peter ἀγνός ‘is virtually synonymous with “holy”’ (see 1,15-16. 22; 3,5),<sup>11</sup> and thus indicates the character of the Christian ἀναστροφή in general. Sexual propriety would no doubt be included, but the pattern of conduct being urged upon the wives requires a broader range of qualities, spelt out further in vv. 3-4 and exemplified in vv. 5-6: subordination, modesty, meekness and silence.

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<sup>7</sup> So, e.g., J. R. MICHAELS, *1 Peter* (WBC 49; Waco, TX, 1988) 138; P. J. ACHTEMEIER, *1 Peter* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia, 1996) 195; J. H. ELLIOTT, *1 Peter: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB37B; New York, 2000) 517. Otherwise N. BROX, *Der erste Petrusbrief* (EKKNT, 21; Zürich/ Neukirchen-Vluyn, <sup>3</sup>1989 [1979]) 79-80, 131, 143.

<sup>8</sup> See further D. G. HORRELL, “Honour Everyone...” (1 Pet. 2.17): The Social Strategy of 1 Peter and its Significance for the Development of Christianity’, in: S. K. BLACK (ed.), *To Set at Liberty: Essays on Early Christianity and its Social World in Honor of John H. Elliott* (Sheffield, 2014) 192-210.

<sup>9</sup> Cf., e.g., J. N. D. KELLY, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and Jude* (BNTC; London, 1969) 128; MACDONALD, *Early Christian Women*, 198. This is probably better conveyed in a translation like ‘reverence’ (e.g., NRSV, NJB, NIV) than with ‘respectful’ (ESV).

<sup>10</sup> Cf. BDAG, 13; LSJ, 12; MM, 5. See, e.g., Plato, *Leg.* 840d 6; 4 Macc 18.7; Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 1.107.

<sup>11</sup> ELLIOTT, *1 Peter*, 560.

This ‘pure’ and holy way of life is further detailed in vv. 3-4, using a pattern typical of 1 Peter, contrasting first the negative and then the positive: ‘not this, but that’ (cf. 1,12; 1,14-15; 1,18-19; 1,23, etc.). The whole construction is somewhat awkward grammatically, yet the basic features of the contrast are clear. As J. N. D. Kelly remarks, ‘[t]he whole construction is distinctly clumsy, but he [sc. the author] is plainly struggling to contrast interior character with outward appearance’.<sup>12</sup> The subject of the negative depiction is the external adornment (κόσμος) which should not epitomise the wives’ way of life: ‘the braiding of hair, the wearing of gold, or the putting on of clothing’ (ESV).

Among Greek and Roman women with sufficient means to engage in these forms of adornment such practices were evidently common, though other contemporary writers also warned against extravagant displays of wealth, and insisted that other qualities, and a modest and dignified demeanour, were more valuable.<sup>13</sup> Similar criticism of ostentatious female attire is expressed by Jewish writers (e.g., *TestReub* 5,1-6; Philo, *Sac.* 21; *Virt.* 39-40). Indeed, as E. G. Selwyn notes, all the various features mentioned here in 1 Peter are already present in ‘the fine satire’ of Isa 3,16-24, in the context of a scathing critique of the display of wealth acquired at the expense of the poor (Isa 3,11-26).<sup>14</sup> As John Elliott notes, the Church Fathers show considerable interest in the theme of women’s attire and this text in 1 Peter, reinforcing and developing prohibitions on what are seen as excessive and

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<sup>12</sup> KELLY, *Peter and Jude*, 129.

<sup>13</sup> See further A. J. BATTEN, ‘Neither Gold nor Braided Hair (1 Timothy 2.9; 1 Peter 3.3): Adornment, Gender and Honour in Antiquity’, *NTS* 55 (2009) 484-501. For example, Plutarch expresses the ideal in a way notably similar to 1 Peter: “Adornment” (κόσμος), said Crates, “is what adorns”; and what adorns a woman is what makes her better ordered (κοσμιωτέραν) — not gold, nor emerald nor scarlet, but whatever gives an impression of dignity (σεμνότης), discipline (εὐταξία), and modesty (αἰδώς)’ (*Mor.* 141E). Text and ET from S. B. POMEROY (ed.), *Plutarch’s Advice to the Bride and Groom and A Consolation to His Wife. English Translations, Commentary, Interpretive Essays, and Bibliography* (New York, Oxford: OUP, 1999); cf. also *Mor.* 145E-146; Dio Chrys. *Or.* 33.48-51 (and other examples cited in ELLIOTT, *1 Peter*, 562-63). Cf. also Menander, *Gnomai* 92: γυναικὶ κόσμος ὁ τρόπος, οὐ τὰ χρυσία (cited in MM, 356); Musonius, *Frag.* 3.25-28. For further examples, see E. G. SELWYN, *The First Epistle of St. Peter* (London & Basingstoke, 1947 [1946]) 183.

<sup>14</sup> SELWYN, *First Epistle*, 183.

inappropriate forms of adornment.<sup>15</sup> External beautification, according to the author of 1 Peter, plays no part in displaying the Christian way of life.

The positive pattern of conduct encouraged by the author, a way of life that may potentially win their husbands for the faith, is, by contrast, a matter of ‘the hidden person of the heart’ (ESV, ὁ κρυπτὸς τῆς καρδίας ἄνθρωπος), a reference to the ‘inner self and the sentiments and dispositions of the human heart’, rather like the phrase ὁ ἔσω ἄνθρωπος (cf. Rom 7,22; 2 Cor 4,16; Eph 3,16).<sup>16</sup> The decision to refer here to the ἄνθρωπος, as opposed to the κόσμος, further suggests that the intended contrast is between external adornment and the ‘real’ person.<sup>17</sup> There might appear to be some irony in depicting this ‘hidden’ person as the basis for missionary success, since if it is hidden, it can hardly make an impression on others. It is clear, however, that the qualities of this ‘hidden’ person are indeed displayed in a way of life. Selwyn suggests that the ἐν that follows (ἐν τῷ ἀφθάρτῳ τοῦ πραέως καὶ ἡσυχίου πνεύματος) conveys the idea ‘found in, expressing itself in’; in other words, this phrase specifies the form in which the ‘hidden person of the heart’ is shown.<sup>18</sup>

Just as Greek and Roman writers (as well as Jewish and Christian ones) warn against ostentatious display and exhort modesty and dignity in appearance, so too the virtues of gentleness (πραότης) and quietness (ἡσυχία) are widely valued. It is clear that being πραῦς was praised as a quality for both men and women, and does not constitute a specifically feminine virtue, even if its forms of appropriate social expression vary according to one’s social and gendered position.<sup>19</sup> Things are

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<sup>15</sup> ELLIOTT, *1 Peter*, 565, with nn. 175-76; similarly KELLY, *Peter and Jude*, 129; L. GOPPELT, *A Commentary on 1 Peter* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1993) 220 with n. 20. One of the most prominent and extended examples is Tertullian, *De cultu fem.* See also *De. orat.* 20. Among other authors, see Clem. Alex. *Paed.* 3.11; Cyprian, *De habitu virg.* 8 (which cites 1 Tim 2,9 and 1 Pet 3,3-4 in support).

<sup>16</sup> ELLIOTT, *1 Peter*, 565; the same New Testament references are given by SELWYN, *First Epistle*, 184.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. MICHAELS, *1 Peter*, 160.

<sup>18</sup> SELWYN, *First Epistle*, 184; cf. DUBIS, *1 Peter*, 88, citing BDAG, 330 §12 for ἐν as a ‘marker of specification or substance’.

<sup>19</sup> See, e.g., Epictetus, *Diss.* 4.7.12; Musonius, *Frag.* 10.25-26 (πράως δὲ καὶ ἡσύχως οἶσει τὸ συμβάν); 10.37-41. Cf. also the Latin *clementia*, which Seneca, for example, urges upon Nero as an appropriate quality for a leader (Seneca, *De clem.*, on which see further R. M. THORSTEINSSON, *Roman*

somewhat similar with ἡσύχιος, which can also be presented as a quality expected of men as well as women.<sup>20</sup> It is therefore correct and significant to stress that these qualities are not generally depicted as virtues for women alone.<sup>21</sup> Nonetheless, quietness or outright silence is particularly expected of women, just as subordination is expected of wives to husbands but not vice versa.<sup>22</sup>

Finally, the author turns to an illustration of the pattern of conduct he has been commending, introduced with a γάρ that signals the way in which what follows will serve as ‘a motivational ground for the exhortations in verses 1-4’.<sup>23</sup> The οὕτως most likely points forward (as in 2,15),<sup>24</sup> specifically to the phrase ὑποτασσόμεναι τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν, an exact repeat of the phrase in v. 1, indicating that the ancient exemplars – Sarah and other ‘holy women’ – embodied precisely the pattern of conduct the author now advocates. Their description as both ἅγαι and as αἱ ἐλπίζουσαι εἰς θεόν shows that they properly exhibit the characteristics required also of the letter’s recipients: holiness (1,15-16) and hope (cf. 1,3. 13. 21).

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*Christianity and Roman Stoicism: A Comparative Study of Ancient Morality* [Oxford, 2010], 183-85). In Jewish sources, see, e.g., Num 12,3; Sir 45,4; Ps 131,1 (LXX); Ps 44,5 (LXX). Jesus likewise depicts himself as πραῦς (Mt 11,29; cf. Mt 21,5; 2 Cor 10,1), and πραῦτης is listed as a virtue in early Christian lists, such as Gal 5,23; Eph 4,2; Col 3,12; Tit 3,2 (cf. also Jas 1,21; 3,13).

<sup>20</sup> Musonius, for example, urges the philosopher to endure adversity with moderation and quietness, combining the same two terms found here in 1 Peter (*Frag.* 10.25-26, quoted in the previous note). In early Christian sources, see 1 Thess 4,11; 2 Thess 3,12; *Did* 3,8; Hermas, *Mand.* 8,10; cf. 1 Tim 2,2. Indeed, early Christian writings not infrequently combine the two terms found here in 1 Pet 3,4 in ways that indicate their ideal quality for all Christians (e.g., 1 *Clem* 13,4; *Barn* 19,4; Hermas, *Mand.* 5,2,3; 6,2,3; 11,8). Cf. MICHAELS, 1 Peter, 162; ELLIOTT, 1 Peter, 566.

<sup>21</sup> A point stressed by MICHAELS, 1 Peter, 162.

<sup>22</sup> Sophocles remarks: γυναιξὶ κόσμον ἢ σιγὴ φέρει, ‘for a woman, silence is an adornment’ (*Ajax* 293, cited, e.g., by ACHTEMEIER, 1 Peter, 214 n. 121). Sirach describes a silent wife (γυνὴ σιγηρά) as a gift from the Lord (Sir 26,14). In the Pauline literature, see 1 Cor 14,34-35; 1 Tim 2,11-12. In 1 Clement the demeanour expected of wives is described in terms very similar to those here – though how similar depends on a crucial textual variant (1 *Clem* 21,7: ‘let them [sc. τὰς γυναῖκας ἡμῶν] exhibit the innocent will of their meekness (τῆς πραῦτητος); let them manifest the gentleness of their tongues through their silence [or through how they speak: διὰ τῆς σιγῆς/φωνῆς]’) ET adapted from EHRMAN (LCL, 2003), who lists the variants and prefers φωνῆς, as in A (the earliest Greek ms of 1 Clement, c. 5<sup>th</sup> century); σιγῆς is read by H, the other Greek ms, as well as by the translational versions, including a Coptic ms of around the 4<sup>th</sup> century, and preferred by LAKE (LCL, 1912).

<sup>23</sup> DUBIS, 1 Peter, 89.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. ELLIOTT, 1 Peter, 570; DUBIS, 1 Peter, 89. Otherwise MICHAELS, 1 Peter, 163, who suggests that the οὕτως ‘resumes vv 1-4 in their entirety’.



Sarah, wife of Abraham, is then presented as a specific and named example of the approved pattern of conduct, a paradigm of the conduct expected of wives, just as Jesus provided a paradigm of that required of slaves in 2,21-25. In some sense this must be an allusion to the stories of Abraham and Sarah recorded in Genesis, but this particular pattern of behaviour is hard to find there. Apart from Gen 18,12, where Sarah says ‘my master is old’ (ὁ δὲ κύριός μου πρεσβύτερος) there is nowhere where she is recorded as calling Abraham κύριος and ‘obeying’ him. Indeed, Gen 16.2 gives a contrary impression: ὑπήκουσεν δὲ Ἀβραμ τῆς φωνῆς Σαρᾶς. It is possible, as Mark Kiley has suggested, that the author is alluding to the wider context of the stories in Genesis 12 and 20, seeing Sarah ‘as a model of those wives who obey their spouses *in an unjust and frightening situation in a foreign land/hostile environment*’.<sup>25</sup> But the author may also be influenced by postbiblical Jewish traditions: the addressing of Abraham as κύριος is prominent in the *Testament of Abraham*, as Troy Martin has shown.<sup>26</sup>

The wives addressed in this section of 1 Peter’s household code are said to have become Sarah’s children (ἧς ἐγενήθητε τέκνα). The aorist verb may point to the time of their conversion, or their baptism/initiation, but the participial phrase that follows indicates that this identity depends on their exhibiting a pattern of conduct congruent with that of their esteemed ancestor. They show themselves to be Sarah’s children by exemplifying a pattern of life like hers, and specifically by ‘doing good, and not being afraid of any terror’ (ἀγαθοποιῶσαι καὶ μὴ φοβούμεναι μηδεμίαν πτόησιν, 3,6). It is possible that Sarah’s example is still in the author’s mind here, at least if silence on the part of Genesis can be given any significance: no fear on Sarah’s part is mentioned in the two accounts in Genesis when she is given over to other men on account of her husband’s passing her off as his sister (in order to protect himself:

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<sup>25</sup> M. KILEY, ‘Like Sara: The Tale of Terror behind 1 Peter 3:6’, *JBL* 106 (1987) 689-92 (692, original emphasis).

<sup>26</sup> T. W. MARTIN, ‘The TestAbr and the Background of 1 Pet 3,6’, *ZNW* 90 (1999) 139-46.

Gen 12,11-20; 20,1-28).<sup>27</sup> Just as these stories hint at the abuse that Sarah suffered, being passed from one man to another as sexual property, so too this exhortation to wives reflects that risk that wives who did not follow the religious commitments and practices of the male *paterfamilias* would be subjected to criticism and physical abuse.<sup>28</sup>

There are, then, both positive and negative facets of the instruction given to wives that are specific to their role and social position: to be subordinate and obedient to their husbands, and not to fear the reprisals that may result from their commitment to Christ. But it would be wholly wrong to regard this section of instruction as depicting a pattern of life relevant only to the wives among the Christian groups. On the contrary, the instruction given to wives here seems to represent one particular example of the pattern of life and witness commended to the congregations as a whole. This becomes clear when we compare the instruction to wives with the more general instruction given in 3,13-17.

### **Wives as a Paradigm of Witness and Mission: 1 Peter 3,1-6 and 3,13-17**

As we noted above, 1 Peter's household code fits within the broader section of practical and ethical instruction that begins at 2,11, where the author turns to advise Christians how to live in an apparently hostile world. The opening of this major new section, 2,11-12, presents a kind of headline statement for what follows, encapsulating concisely both dimensions of the Christians' ambivalent and difficult relationship to the world. As Leonhard Goppelt remarks, 'these two verses provide fundamental direction – first negatively and then positively – for the behavior of

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. KILEY, 'Like Sara'.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. BALCH, *Wives*, 63-121; C. E. JOHNSON HODGE, "Holy Wives" in Roman Households: 1 Peter 3: 1-6', *Journal of Interdisciplinary Feminist Thought* 4/1 (2010) article 1 (n.p.). Often cited as illustrating this principle is Plutarch's advice to bride and groom: 'it is becoming for a wife to worship and to know only the gods that her husband believes in, and to shut the front door tight upon all queer rituals and outlandish superstitions. For with no god do stealthy and secret rites performed by a woman find any favour' (*Mor.* 140D; LCL, F.C. BABBITT). On the difficulties in practice for Christian wives, see Tertullian, *Ad Uxor.* 2.4-5.

Christians in society'.<sup>29</sup> As 'aliens and strangers' (παροίκους καὶ παρεπιδήμους) they are required to distance themselves from the 'fleshly desires' (σαρκικῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν) that characterised their former lives and still characterise the lives of those among whom they live (4,2-4). But the new 'lifestyle' (ἀναστροφή) they are now to display is nonetheless to be attractive and good (καλήν) to the 'gentiles' (ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν), such that those who currently criticise and condemn them may be won over (2,12-15; 2,20; 3,6; 3,11-17; 4,19). The first specific set of instructions then urges the addressees as a whole to be submissive (ὑποτάγητε) to every human creature,<sup>30</sup> specifically to the emperor and his governors.<sup>31</sup>

Two key features of Christian living in the world are thus set out here: the need for good conduct and the need for appropriate submission. Both of these main features are paralleled in the specific instructions to slaves (2,18 [ὑποτασσόμενοι]; 2,20 [ἀγαθοποιῶντες]) and to wives (3,1 [ὑποτασσόμεναι]; 3,6 [ἀγαθοποιῶσαι]). In addition, a missionary motivation for such conduct is given both in the headline introduction (2,12, ἵνα...) and in the instruction to wives (3,1, ἵνα...). Indeed, more

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<sup>29</sup> GOPPELT, *1 Peter*, 155.

<sup>30</sup> It has long been proposed that the phrase here in 1 Peter should be understood as a reference to every human 'institution', 'order', or 'system of established authority', e.g., by F. J. A. HORT, *The First Epistle of St. Peter I.1–II.17: The Greek Text with Introductory Lecture, Commentary, and Additional Notes* (London, 1898) 140 ('a fundamental institution of human society'); similarly, SELWYN, *First Epistle*, 172. This is very widely followed in modern translations: 'ordinance' (Geneva, Tyndale, KJV); 'institution' (RSV, NAB, NJB, NRSV, ESV, Traducion Oecuménique [1988]); 'authority' (NIV); 'Ordnung' (Lutherbibel [1984]; Einheitsübersetzung [1980]). But it has long been objected that this not only requires a less obvious sense for κρίσις but also fits less appropriately into the context, where the following examples relate to persons, not institutions or orders (so W. FOERSTER, *TDNT* 3.1034-35). A number of recent commentators therefore rightly favour 'every human creature' here, e.g.: KELLY, *Peter and Jude*, 108; MICHAELS, *1 Peter*, 124; ELLIOTT, *1 Peter*, 489; ACHTEMEIER, *1 Peter*, 182; SCHLOSSER, *Première épître*, 153-54 (with note a).

<sup>31</sup> The author of 1 Peter has therefore brought together the (Pauline) teaching on submission to the governing authorities (Rom 13,1-7) and within the household (Col 3,18-4,1, etc.). However, the broadening of the exhortation to submission 'to every human creature' also gives a sense that, while submission is specifically due from some social groups to others, there is a general obligation to display this attitude towards others, in ways deemed apposite to their position, somewhat like Eph 5,21, though there this is focused on the Christian community's inner relationships alone. For further discussion of the use of this Pauline material in 1 Peter, see D. G. HORRELL, *Becoming Christian: Essays on 1 Peter and the Making of Christian Identity* (LNTS/ECC 394; London & New York, 2013) 16-18.

than 2,18-20 (where no such motivation is made explicit), the instruction to wives fully captures the key aspects and emphases of the headline appeal in 2,11-12, including its focus on way of life (2,12; 3,1-2) and its missionary motivation (see Table 1).

**Table 1: Parallels between 1 Pet 2,11-13, 1 Pet 2,18-20, and 1 Pet 3,1-6**

	1 Pet 2,11-13	1 Pet 2,18-20	1 Pet 3,1-6
The need for good conduct	τὴν ἀναστροφὴν ὑμῶν ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν ἔχοντες καλὴν (2,12)	ἀγαθοποιοῦντες (2,20)	τὴν ἀγνὴν ἀναστροφὴν ὑμῶν (3,2; also 3,1: ἀναστροφή) ἀγαθοποιοῦσαι (3,6)
The need for appropriate submission	ὑποτάγητε πάσῃ ἀνθρωπίνῃ κτίσει διὰ τὸν κύριον (2,13)	ὑποτασσόμενοι... τοῖς δεσπόταις (2,18)	ὑποτασσόμεναι τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν (3,1)
Missionary motivation	ἵνα... δοξάσωσιν τὸν θεόν (2,12)	--	ἵνα... κερδηθῇσονται (3,1)

The exemplary and paradigmatic character of the behaviour and lifestyle required of the wives becomes even clearer, however, when we compare the instruction in 3,1-6 with that in 3,13-17.<sup>32</sup> The household code material proper ends in 3,7 with the instruction to husbands. This is followed by an exhortation to the whole community (πάντες, 3,8) and an extended quotation from scripture (3,10-12). Then, in 3,13-17, the author advises all the addressees on how they should react in

<sup>32</sup> Parallels between the two passages are briefly noted by ELLIOTT, *1 Peter*, 619 n. 230 and set out in more detail by J. K. BROWN, 'Silent Wives, Verbal Believers: Ethical and Hermeneutical Considerations in 1 Peter 3:1-6 and Its Context', *W&W* 24 (2004) 395-403 (396-97). However, Brown's argument is that the conduct demanded of the wives is not intended to be paradigmatic (see further below).

situations where, despite their good way of life, they still encounter hostility and accusation. Here we find a remarkable number of close parallels to the instruction previously given to wives (see Table 2).

**Table 2: Parallels between 1 Pet 3,1-6 and 1 Pet 3,13-17**

Theme	in 3,1-6	in 3,13-17
Concern for an appropriate 'way of life'	τὴν ἀγνὴν ἀναστροφὴν ὑμῶν (3,2; also 3,1: ἀναστροφή)	τὴν ἀγαθὴν ἐν Χριστῷ ἀναστροφὴν (3,16)
Qualities of disposition: Appropriate fear	ἐν φόβῳ (3,2)	μετὰ... φόβου (3,16)
Gentleness	τοῦ πραέως καὶ ἡσυχίου πνεύματος (3,4)	μετὰ πραΰτητος (3,16)
Hope	αἱ ἐλπίζουσαι εἰς θεόν (3,5)	περὶ τῆς ἐν ὑμῖν ἐλπίδος (3,15)
What is hidden in the heart	ὁ κρυπτὸς τῆς καρδίας ἄνθρωπος (3,4)	ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν (3,15)
Doing good	ἀγαθοποιοῦσαι (3,6)	ἀγαθοποιοῦντας (3,17)
Instruction not to be afraid	μὴ φοβούμεναι μηδεμίαν πτόησιν (3,6)	τὸν δὲ φόβον αὐτῶν μὴ φοβηθῆτε μηδὲ ταραχθῆτε (3,14)

What do these parallels tell us about the missionary stance of the author of 1 Peter? One reason why both wives and slaves can serve for the author as paradigms of the pattern of behaviour urged upon the Christian community as a whole is because they are particularly vulnerable to suffering; this vulnerability characterises all the letter's addressees, and is a prominent concern for the author throughout. Slaves were of

course particularly liable to physical punishment and abuse (not least sexual abuse) at the hands of their owners, and wives were at risk, particularly if they did not follow the religious customs and practices of the *paterfamilias*. The letter hints at these ominous possibilities: slaves are urged to submit even to cruel masters (καὶ τοῖς σκολιοῖς, 2,18) and the possibility of being beaten is clear (2,19-20). The description of the husbands as ‘disobedient to the word’ (ἀπειθοῦσιν τῷ λόγῳ, 3,1) might hint at their antagonism towards the Christian faith, and thus the risk of hostility to their wives’ commitment, but this language is used elsewhere (2,8) so should not be given too much specific weight. But the comment in 3,6 clearly suggests that wives may indeed face hostility and abuse of such a level that it causes terror.

In this situation of vulnerability and potential suffering, the author’s main focus in terms of positive instruction is on following an appropriate pattern of conduct (ἀναστροφή). As we have already noted, this word is a particular favourite of the author of 1 Peter (6/13 of the NT occurrences)<sup>33</sup> and its appearances in the letter indicate how it encapsulates in essence what it is to which the author calls his addressees: they are to turn away from a worthless ἀναστροφή, inherited from their ancestors (1,18) and adopt a holy and good way of life ‘in Christ’ (3,16). This way of life is to be characterised by doing good (2,12. 14-15. 20; 3,6. 11. 13. 16-17; 4,19).<sup>34</sup> In terms of missionary dynamics, it is also clear that it is this ‘good’ way of life that is the fundamental means by which Christians – and wives in particular – are meant to make their appeal to those who are currently non-believers: husbands who are ‘disobedient to the word’ (3,1) or more generally the ‘gentiles’ (ἔθνη) among whom they live (2,12; 4,3). The Christians’ way of life is meant to be visibly and demonstrably attractive, in such a way that it might plausibly win over their critics.

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<sup>33</sup> These are: Gal 1,13; Eph 4,22; 1 Tim 4,12; Heb 13,7; Jas 3,13; 1 Pet 1,15. 18; 2,12; 3,1. 2. 16; 2 Pet 2,7; 3,11.

<sup>34</sup> On this prominent and important theme in 1 Peter, and its scholarly interpretation, see the recent treatment of T. B. WILLIAMS, *Good Works in 1 Peter: Negotiating Social Conflict and Christian Identity in the Greco-Roman World* (WUNT 337; Tübingen, 2014).

Yet this does not mean that the author's idea of a 'good' way of life is one that primarily represents conformity or assimilation to what outsiders expect. In some respects it may imply this – in following conventional expectations for wifely subordination and silence, for example<sup>35</sup> – but in other respects it is a way of life that resists wider socio-political demands, and thus may engender hostility and even violence, hence the author's strong exhortations not to be afraid of such threats. This is most obviously the case in respect of the devotion to Christ and God that makes other expressions of 'fear' or reverence inappropriate or idolatrous.

Thus, the addressees are urged to be subject to all human creatures, and specifically to the emperor and his governors. But this does not imply acquiescing in expectations to join in the veneration of the emperor, his family, and the gods of Rome in the various festivals and activities broadly referred to as the imperial cults.<sup>36</sup> Rather, the author's measured but firm resistance to such demands is concisely conveyed in 2,17, a statement that encapsulates a stance that later martyrs and apologists would frequently echo.<sup>37</sup> Wives are specifically urged to submit to their husbands, but this does not imply acquiescing in expectations or demands to join in what would now be regarded, from a Christian perspective, as idolatry (4.3).

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<sup>35</sup> Hence the feminist criticism directed at 1 Peter, not only for affirming such conventions but also adding new legitimation to them, making this part of the Christian 'way of life', even in situations where suffering may be experienced. Part of the legacy of this is the insistence in some (conservative) Christian teaching that women should even endure domestic or sexual abuse rather than leave the marriage. Among the forceful critiques of 1 Peter in this respect, see K. CORLEY, '1 Peter', in: E. SCHÜSSLER FIORENZA (ed.), *Searching the Scriptures, Vol.2: A Feminist Commentary* (London, 1995) 349-60; J. G. BIRD, *Abuse, Power and Fearful Obedience: Reconsidering 1 Peter's Commands to Wives* (LNTS 442; London & New York, 2011). See also the critical and nuanced reflections on this issue in B. J. BAUMAN-MARTIN, 'Feminist Theologies of Suffering and Current Interpretations of 1 Peter 2.18-3.9', in: A.-J. LEVINE and M. MAYO ROBBINS (eds), *A Feminist Companion to the Catholic Epistles* (London & New York, 2004) 63-81.

<sup>36</sup> Still fundamental to the discussion of this topic in Asia Minor is S. R. F. PRICE, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge, 1984). See also S. J. FRIESEN, *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John: Reading Revelation in the Ruins* (Oxford & New York, 2001) 23-132.

<sup>37</sup> See further HORRELL, *Becoming Christian*, 232-33; *idem*, 'Honour Everyone', 201-206. Perhaps the clearest allusion to 1 Pet 2,17 among the early martyr accounts is in *ActScill* 8-9: 'We have none other whom we worship but our Lord God who is in heaven... Honour to Caesar as Caesar, but worship only to God' (*Nos non habemus alium quem timeamus nisi domnum Deum nostrum qui est in caelis... Honorem Caesari quasi Caesari; timorem autem Deo*).

Moreover, the fact that the Christian's veneration of Christ is 'in the heart' (3,15), just as the wives' gentle character is rooted in 'the hidden person of the heart' (3,4), does not mean that this is an entirely secret and hidden way of life, masked by an external pattern of complete conformity.<sup>38</sup> Rather, in both cases, there are aspects of this way of life that will cause conflict and dissonance with the lifestyle of those among whom they live (cf. 4,2-3).<sup>39</sup>

It is in this context that we are to make sense of the author's emphatic instructions not to be afraid. In the case of wives, this is part of the pattern of behaviour exemplified by Sarah, as discussed above. While the specific appeal is to her (supposed) submission and obedience to her husband, Abraham, it is likely that her pattern of conduct – specifically her lack of fear – is also assumed as an example insofar as living as her children should mean exemplifying similar qualities and way of life.<sup>40</sup> Thus the wives are emphatically urged, in a phrase adapted from Prov 3,25, not to fear any terror at all (μηδεμίαν πτόησιν).<sup>41</sup> This must refer to the terrors they might face from other human beings, particularly those (like husbands who are 'disobedient' to the faith) who do not share their faith in Christ. In 3,14 there is an equally emphatic instruction not to be afraid, again adapted from a scriptural source (Isa 8,12).<sup>42</sup> It is difficult to be sure exactly how to interpret the opening of this phrase (τὸν δὲ φόβον αὐτῶν), but taking it as an objective genitive is probably most

<sup>38</sup> Pace W. CARTER, 'Going All the Way? Honoring the Emperor and Sacrificing Wives and Slaves in 1 Peter 2.13-3.6', in: A.-J. LEVINE and M. MAYO ROBBINS (eds), *A Feminist Companion to the Catholic Epistles* (London & New York, 2004) 14-33.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. also D. HOLM, 'Holy Engagement: "Doing Good" as a Missional Response in 1 Peter', *Leaven* 20 (2012) 110-16 (112): 'the Christians at times suffer because of the backlash their good works provoke, suggesting that the Christian concept of good works did not always overlap with Hellenistic moral values'. See further the arguments of WILLIAMS, *Good Works*.

<sup>40</sup> Pace GOPPELT, *1 Peter*, 225 n. 51 ('This second expression is not illustrated by the Sarah story'); MICHAELS, *1 Peter*, 166; ELLIOTT, *1 Peter*, 574 (this phrase 'has no relation to the story of Sarah and Abraham').

<sup>41</sup> As DUBIS, *1 Peter*, 92, points out, μηδεμίαν, along with the negative μή, adds emphasis here. The emphasis is likely deliberate, since μηδεμίαν is added to the text of Prov 3,25 (οὐ φοβηθήσῃ πτόησιν).

<sup>42</sup> As MICHAELS, *1 Peter*, 167, points out, it is only in 3,6 and 3,14 that 'fear' appears in a negative sense as something to be avoided, and in both cases the phrase is drawn from a scriptural source.



plausible,<sup>43</sup> in which case it is a direct and emphatic exhortation not to be afraid of ‘them’. The counterpart to these direct exhortations is of course the clear indication that their lives should be governed by an appropriate ‘fear’ of God (2,17; cf. 1,17; 2,18; 3,2). In 3,16 there are again indications that this kind of ‘fear’ is directed towards God, since it is a disposition to be accompanied by having a ‘good conscience’, a phrase which, as 3,21 shows, denotes the believer’s right stance towards God.

All this indicates that, so far as any ‘missionary’ stance goes, for both wives in particular and Christians in general, the dominant and expected mode of engagement, so far as the author of 1 Peter is concerned, is *the quiet and gentle living of a good way of life*.<sup>44</sup> In other words, Christian mission – insofar as it takes place actively at all – consists in living τὴν ἀγαθὴν ἐν Χριστῷ ἀναστροφὴν. It is what outsiders can *see* that matters (cf. ἐποπτεύσαντες in 2,12 and 3,2).<sup>45</sup> The important declaration about the purpose of the Christian community’s identity in 2,9-10 does not undermine this argument:<sup>46</sup> even if ἐξαγγέλλω includes the idea of witness to the world as well as (more fundamentally) worship directed to God,<sup>47</sup> it is the identity,

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<sup>43</sup> So, e.g., SELWYN, *First Epistle*, 192; ELLIOTT, *1 Peter*, 624-25; MICHAELS, *1 Peter*, 186-87. Favouring the subjective genitive is DUBIS, *1 Peter*, 108.

<sup>44</sup> Pace C. STENSCHKE, ‘Mission and Conversion in the First Epistle of Peter’, *Acta Patristica et Byzantina* 19 (2008) 221-63 (242), who insists that ‘1 Peter 3.1 does *not* imply that these wives should be silent *in other circumstances*, nor does it mean that other women or men should abstain from verbal proclamation... The silence of the Christian wives towards their non-Christian husbands is an *exception* to the rule.’ But where is this ‘rule’ stated or even implied in 1 Peter? On doing good works as a kind of missionary strategy, see HOLM, ‘Holy Engagement’, 112-14.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. A. PUIG i TÀRRECH, ‘The Mission According to the New Testament: Choice or Need?’, in A. ALEXEEV *et al.* (eds.), *Einheit der Kirche im Neuen Testament* (WUNT 218; Tübingen, 2008) 231-47, esp. 237-47, who speaks of the powerful attraction of early Christian communities.

<sup>46</sup> Pace STENSCHKE, ‘Mission and Conversion’, 241: ‘This is a clear call for verbal proclamation of the gospel’. On the importance of 2.9-12 as a central passage for understanding the missionary stance of the letter, see D. HOLM, ‘Holy Engagement: Doing Good and Verbal Witness as Missional Activity in 1 Peter’ (PhD thesis, University of Bristol, UK, 2014).

<sup>47</sup> For the argument that it refers primarily to worship of God, see esp. BALCH, *Wives*, 133; also T. SELAND, ‘The “Common Priesthood” of Philo and 1 Peter: A Philonic Reading of 1 Peter 2:5, 9’, *JSNT* 57 (1995) 87-119 (116-18), repr. in T. SELAND, *Strangers in the Light: Philonic Perspectives on Christian Identity in 1 Peter* (Biblical Interpretation 76; Leiden, 2005) 111-13. Seland takes a somewhat different view in his more recent article, cited in the next note. Cf. MICHAELS, *1 Peter*, 110,

existence, and practice of the Christian community as God's elect and holy people that stands here as witness to the excellent virtues of the God who has called them.<sup>48</sup>

This leaves, however, one clear point of contrast between the exhortation given to wives, and the more general exhortation in 3,13-17: the wives are urged to live in a way that may win over their husbands *ἄνευ λόγου* (3,1) whereas 3,15 deals with the offering of verbal testimony. Part of the explanation for this otherwise unusual emphasis on speaking out is that it is in response to enquiry (*τῷ αἰτοῦντι ὑμᾶς*). Verbal testimony is not the normal or proactive mode of Christian witness, according to 1 Peter, but is something which Christians should always be prepared (*ἔτοιμοι εἶναι*) to give.<sup>49</sup>

What are the contexts in which the author imagines that such witness might need to be given? Scholarship on 1 Peter has given changing answers to this question, following broader changes in perspectives on the kind of hostility and suffering that is in view in the letter. Contrary to views expressed in earlier scholarship, the dominant modern consensus is that the suffering and persecution evident in 1 Peter are 'unofficial', a matter of public hostility and slander rather than 'official' imperial persecution.<sup>50</sup> From this perspective, the situations in view in 3,15

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who rejects any sharp distinction between worship and testimony, but suggests that *ἐξαγγέλλω* 'belongs in the category of worship, not missionary activity'.

<sup>48</sup> Pace T. SELAND, 'Resident Aliens in Mission: Missional Practices in the Emerging Church of 1 Peter', *BBR* 19 (2009) 565-89, esp. 583-89, who argues that 2,9 signifies 'the missional, proclamatory act of the readers' (585) and that this implies 'proclaiming the Word' (alongside their 'good works') as part of what the author urged as their missionary strategy (589). Seland also takes the references to the readers' own conversion (1,12. 25, both using *εὐαγγελίζω*) as showing that 'the author perceives the preaching of the Word to be pivotal in the lives of these Christians' (580). There seem to me too many Protestant presuppositions at work here in the assumption that the evangelising of the readers must entail 'preaching' and 'proclamation' and thus must require it on the part of the readers in turn.

<sup>49</sup> On the contrast between 3,1 and 3,15, see also BROWN, 'Silent Wives', though her argument is that the 'silent' pattern of witness is the exception, such that wives are not paradigmatic for mission in 1 Peter (see 396 n. 5). My argument takes the opposite line: that the verbal witness is the unusual practice, called for in certain circumstances.

<sup>50</sup> For an extensive and more nuanced study of the history of research, see T. B. WILLIAMS, 'Suffering from a Critical Oversight: The Persecutions of 1 Peter within Modern Scholarship', *CBR* 10 (2012) 271-88; T. B. WILLIAMS, *Persecution in 1 Peter: Differentiating and Contextualizing Early Christian Suffering* (NovTSup 145; Leiden, 2012) 4-15.

are most likely everyday. As John Elliott remarks: ‘The presupposed situation is an ongoing one always facing the believers. It involves not formal trials and the demands of official magistrates... but occasions when outsiders, out of curiosity, ask for explanations of the hope that animates these believers’.<sup>51</sup> Similarly, Ramsey Michaels comments: ‘Here in 1 Peter, the language of the courtroom is being applied to informal exchanges that can occur between Christian and non-Christian at any time... and under varied circumstances’.<sup>52</sup> Nonetheless, as Michaels’ comments indicate, the language used in 3,15 does resonate well with a courtroom setting and the formal context of accusation and response.<sup>53</sup>

The term ἀπολογία in particular was often used of a formal defence made in a legal or judicial context, as in Acts 22,1; 25,16 and 2 Tim 2,16 (and also in uses of the verb ἀπολογέομαι in Lk 12,11; 21,14; Acts 19,33; 24,10; 25,8; 26,1-2. 24).<sup>54</sup> It can, however, also refer more generally to ‘an argument made in one’s own behalf in the face of misunderstanding or criticism’,<sup>55</sup> as in 1 Cor 9,3 and 2 Cor 7,11 (and the verbal forms in Rom 2,15; 2 Cor 12,19).<sup>56</sup> The occurrences in Phil 1,7 and 1,16 are worth noting, since Paul is writing from prison, and thus facing the prospect of a judicial hearing, which he depicts as an opportunity for a ‘defence of the gospel’ (ἀπολογία τοῦ εὐαγγελίου). This puts an internal Christian perspective onto the defence, just as the author of 1 Peter presents it as giving an account of ‘the hope that is in you’ (see below), and urges his readers to be prepared in advance to do so.

The broad and general reference to παντὶ τῷ αἰτοῦντι ὑμᾶς may well imply that the author envisages a wide range of potential scenarios,<sup>57</sup> some informal and others

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<sup>51</sup> ELLIOTT, *1 Peter*, 628.

<sup>52</sup> MICHAELS, *1 Peter*, 188.

<sup>53</sup> See the recent discussion in WILLIAMS, *Persecution*, 309-16.

<sup>54</sup> For comparable uses in extra-biblical Greek literature, see, e.g., Plato, *Apol.* 24B; Thucydides 3.62.6; 8.68.2; Lysias 6.35; Dionysius Halicarnassus 7.58.1; Diodorus Sic. 4.53.1.

<sup>55</sup> MICHAELS, *1 Peter*, 188. Similarly, ELLIOTT, *1 Peter*, 627.

<sup>56</sup> Cf., e.g., Plato, *Prot.* 359A3; Lucian, *Hes.* 5.1; 6.3.

<sup>57</sup> As noted, e.g., by ELLIOTT, *1 Peter*, 627, who relates these encounters to everyday life, and not legal proceedings. By contrast, F. W. BEARE, *The First Epistle of Peter* (Oxford, <sup>3</sup>1970 [1947]) 164, states that this phrase ‘can only apply to a judicial interrogation’. Cf. also P. A. HOLLOWAY, *Coping with*

judicial. The particular phrase αἰτεῖν λόγον is certainly appropriate in the context of legal trial, where someone is required to ‘give an account’ (cf. 4,5; Rom 14,12, both referring to a context of God’s final judgment),<sup>58</sup> though it can also refer more broadly to a demand for some kind of account or explanation.<sup>59</sup> Nonetheless, the combination in 3,15 of a number of words and phrases well suited to a legal context points us strongly in this direction (cf. *MartPol* 10,1-2).<sup>60</sup> The character of the enquiry is therefore most likely hostile and accusatory.

The description of the content of this λόγος as περὶ τῆς ἐν ὑμῖν ἐλπίδος does not by any means indicate ‘that the author is referring here not to formal defenses before legal authorities (who would be concerned not with expectation concerning the future but culpable behavior in the present) but rather to replies to informal inquiries concerning the nature and basis of Christian hope’, as Elliott argues.<sup>61</sup> To be sure, this description of the content of their account hardly represents the language which the magistrates or governors would have used, though nor is it necessarily the language of informal inquiries. It is the *author’s* terminology and reflects the prominence of hope in *his* notion of Christian existence (cf. 1,3. 21).<sup>62</sup> It represents a Christian perspective on what could and should characterise one’s prepared ἀπολογία. Indeed, other accounts and martyrologies give similar indications that Christians under trial did not simply answer the questions posed, but sought to give an account which would convey something of their own perspective and priorities (cf. Acts 26,1-23 [note the reference to ‘hope’ in vv. 6-7]; *MartPol* 10,1-2; *ActScill* 4; *MartApoll* 4). These are of course literary constructions not records of the actual dialogues, but whatever their historical verisimilitude, they at least give a picture of how Christians depicted their encounters with judicial authorities.

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*Prejudice: 1 Peter in Social-Psychological Perspective* (WUNT 244; Tübingen, 2009) 70 with n. 200, 202 with n. 62.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. BEARE, *First Epistle*, 164; HOLLOWAY, *Coping with Prejudice*, 203. E.g., Dio Chrys. *Or.* 12.49.

<sup>59</sup> E.g., Plato, *Politicus* 285E (τῷ λόγον αἰτοῦντι); Dio Chrys. *Or.* 37.30; cf. BDAG, 600 §2.a.

<sup>60</sup> See esp. HOLLOWAY, *Coping with Prejudice*, 199-205.

<sup>61</sup> ELLIOTT, *1 Peter*, 627.

<sup>62</sup> GOPPELT, *1 Peter*, 244. Cf. HOLLOWAY, *Coping with Prejudice*, 203-204.

The idea that 3,15 might refer to courtroom situations is further strengthened if we accept that the language of 1 Pet 4,12-19, and vv. 15-16 in particular, also reflects a similar context, given the close parallels with the description of the trials of Christians in Pliny's famous letter (*Ep.* 10,96), a case I have argued in detail elsewhere.<sup>63</sup> Indeed, recent research, including my own, has pressed the case that legal accusations and courtroom trials were very likely part of the range of threats facing the Christians addressed by 1 Peter, given the effectively illegal status of Christians from the time of Nero onwards.<sup>64</sup> This does not mean – as those arguing against ‘official’ persecution have often supposed – that 1 Peter must reflect one of the specific periods traditionally seen as times of early imperial persecution, under Nero, Domitian, or Trajan, or that what is in view is any kind of inquisitorial or proactive imperial persecution. Rather, the legal status of Christians meant that public hostility could lead to formal accusations and courtroom trials,<sup>65</sup> where if the governor or other appointed authorities were so disposed, merely the admission of being a Christian could lead to punishment and death. In such contexts in particular, the author urges his addressees to be ready to give an account of their ‘hope’ (3,15) and to bear the name ‘Christian’ openly and proudly, as a means to glorify God (4,16). It seems, however, that such open and verbal testimony is the exception rather than the rule, a form of witness that should be willingly offered when requested, but not proactively undertaken.

Here in 3,16, as in 2,12 and 3,1-2, there is also an expression (again with ἵνα) of the hoped for outcome of this testimony. But each such statement is somewhat

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<sup>63</sup> See D. G. HORRELL, ‘The Label Χριστιανός: 1 Pet 4.16 and the Formation of Christian Identity’, *JBL* 126 (2007) 361-81 (esp. 370-76); *idem*, *Becoming Christian*, 183-97.

<sup>64</sup> Alongside my own work cited in the previous note, see esp. HOLLOWAY, *Coping with Prejudice*, esp. 4-5, 65-73, 202-205, 220-27; WILLIAMS, *Persecution*.

<sup>65</sup> Hence Trajan mildly reprimands Pliny for going beyond the constraints of the accusatorial procedure, and finding names of possible Christians on anonymous lists (Pliny *Ep.* 10,97). The procedure for judicial trial of Christians in the first two centuries was ordinarily that of accusation by some other member of the public. See further HORRELL, *Becoming Christian*, 189 with n. 138; WILLIAMS, *Persecution*, esp. 170-71, 228-30.

distinctive. In 2,12, the focus is on the eschatological day: if the Christians' accusers do not now recognise their way of life as good, they will do so eventually and will have to acknowledge and reverence the God who is its source. In 3,1-2 the hope is that disobedient husbands may be 'won over' – presumably here and now, the sooner the better. In 3,16, as is fitting for a courtroom context of accusation, the language is more negative: those who accuse the Christians will themselves be put to shame (καταισχυνθῶσιν).<sup>66</sup> While there may again be eschatological nuance here (cf. 4,17-19) there is also the hope – however vain it proved to be – that here and now, accusations will be shown to be baseless and false, when the believers' way of life is defended and explained.

### **Way of Life as Witness: the Missionary Dynamics of 1 Peter**

It is time to stand back from the details and draw some brief conclusions concerning 1 Peter's view of Christian mission. The instructions to wives, though specific in some ways to their social position, serve as a particular example of the kind of missionary stance that the author of 1 Peter commends. The central demand is to follow the good way of life (ἀναστροφή) that is appropriate to their allegiance to Christ and to God. In some ways this means exhibiting patterns of behaviour that will be widely and conventionally recognised as good, though in other ways this implies a conflict between this way of life and the expectations of life in a polytheistic society under Roman imperial rule. For this latter reason, the author gives clear exhortations not to be afraid of any terrors that humans can inflict (3,6; 3,14) and urges the readers to stand firm and resist (5,8-12).<sup>67</sup> Nonetheless, the

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<sup>66</sup> Note the comparable language of shaming in 4,16, where the author insists that the label 'Christian' is no cause for shame (μὴ αἰσχυνέσθω). On the punishments that could be suffered by those whose accusations were deemed to be false – and thus the inherent risks in the accusatorial system – see WILLIAMS, *Suffering*, 228-29.

<sup>67</sup> On 5.8-12 as encapsulating a central message of the letter, see D. G. HORRELL, B. ARNOLD, and T. B. WILLIAMS, 'Visuality, Vivid Description, and the Message of 1 Peter: The Significance of the Roaring Lion (1 Peter 5:8)', *JBL* 132 (2013) 697-716 (712-16).

author's hope is that this way of life will, at least in some cases, prove sufficiently appealing and attractive to win over critics and sceptics to the Christian faith – if not now, then on the final eschatological day (2,12). Giving verbal testimony is an unusual, 'extraordinary' mode of mission that is adopted when required by the enquiries of others, particularly in courtroom settings, though not exclusively there. The focus on situations where the Christians are being falsely maligned and accused (καταλαλέω [2,12; 3,16]; ὀνειδίζω [4,14]) suggests that the author's main hope is for an end to such negative stereotyping and the forms of suffering to which it may lead. No doubt he would be pleased if outsiders were won over to the faith but the threat posed by their negative reaction is the more immediate and pressing concern.

This is a distinctive characterisation of the dynamics of early Christian mission, or, more broadly, of Christian existence in a hostile world. The author of 1 Peter draws on Pauline teaching – such as on submission to the governing authorities and within the household – but incorporates this into his own particular negotiation of the Christians' difficult relationship with the wider world, reflecting the particular challenges and pressures of his own time and context.<sup>68</sup> Although Paul's letters receive much more attention from New Testament scholars than does 1 Peter, the stance this letter develops and articulates would prove to be important and influential for Christians in the second and third centuries, encouraging them to follow their way of life in Christ, quietly but resolutely, ready when asked fearlessly to explain their 'hope'. Quiet appeal by means of a good way of life is a strategy well-suited to a context where accusation and violence are ever-present possibilities, though it does not imply avoiding all conflict or accepting all external demands, as Christians who followed 1 Peter's position sometimes had to make clear.

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<sup>68</sup> The similarities and differences compared to Paul should be neither exaggerated nor ignored, and the ideal of living a 'quiet' and good life finds expression in Paul too (e.g., 1 Thess 4,11-12). A range of factors may help to explain the distinctive presentation of 1 Peter, a generation or so later: the wide range of early Christian traditions incorporated in the letter (see HORRELL, *Becoming Christian*, 7-44); the increased public prominence and worsened legal status of the Christians, particularly after Nero. But the stance the author develops, of 'polite resistance' while quietly doing good, was not the only possible position, as the book of Revelation shows.

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